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SUBJECT: ADDIS ABABA EAC MEETS TO DISCUSS MAY 20 EXPLOSIONS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT MINI-VAN.

¶1. (U) On Wednesday, May 21, 2008 The Addis Ababa Emergency Action Committee (EAC) met to discuss the May 20 incident in which a public transport mini-van experienced a bombing resulting in casualties. The following EAC members were present: DCM, USAID, PAO, MGT, GSO, ORA, MSG, OBO, CLO, USAU, POL/ECON, REFCOORD, HU, CLO, SAO, DAO, RSO and Peace Corps.

THE MAY 20 INCIDENT

¶2. (U) On Tuesday, May 20, 2008 at approximately 20:08 hours local time RSO Addis Ababa received reports of an explosion in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It was reported a small local transport mini van had exploded on a public street located adjacent to the Hilton Hotel, directly outside the offices of the Ethiopian Government Mapping Agency. This incident occurred approximately 1.5 miles south of the Chancery, on a heavily traveled street passing through a part of the city primarily occupied by Government of Ethiopia offices (to include Ministry of Foreign Affairs) as well as the two major hotels (Hilton and Sheraton). Three persons were reported killed, five to nine others were reported wounded (depending on the source) as result of this incident.

¶3. (U) The Mission does not have any residential or official locations in this area. However, the Hilton hotel is frequented and utilized by Mission personnel on a daily basis. The road where this incident occurred is traveled on a daily basis by most Mission personnel travelling to/from the Embassy. All Mission personnel are safe and accounted for. Initially it was reported all those injured and killed were local nationals. Later it was disclosed one of those injured might be an Israeli citizen, who was a passenger on the bus. Late on May 21, embassy learned that this individual was a dual American/Israeli national. At about 4:15 local May 21 we received notification that this individual died of his wounds. The consular section is taking appropriate notification actions.

¶4. (U) No Mission personnel where reported to have been in the immediate vicinity of this explosion. Some Mission personnel residing at the nearby Hilton Hotel reported hearing and feeling the explosion. Other mission personnel reported passing through the scene of the incident immediately before (less than 5 minutes) the explosion occurred. Within a short period of time following the explosion, it was observed and reported most mini-van public transports were apparently pulled from the street. Ethiopian police response was swift, and the area was cordoned off for several hours.

The area was cleaned and reopened to traffic by 2245 hours. During the early morning hours of May 21, all that remained of this incident was a large trace burn mark on the pavement, some vehicle glass fragments and some areas of staining on the asphalt (presumably the result of vehicle or human fluids).

¶5. (SBU) Sources advise the following:

-The bombing of the mini van public transport is a malicious and intentional act, and was not an accident.

-According to Ethiopian press reports, this incident was the result

of a terrorist act (NFI).

-One source advised the explosion involved a timed device that was on the mini-van (NFI);

-Another source stated the explosion was the result of C-4 or high explosives (NFI).

¶16. (U) RSO Addis Ababa called in a telephone report to DS Command Center upon receiving initial report of the explosion as well as a later follow-up report as additional details were made available on the evening of the incident. This was followed by a written Spot Report to DS command center on the morning of May 21. All information provided regarding this incident is subject to change as additional information becomes available.

EAC MEETING

¶17. (U) The RSO briefed the EAC regarding the above incident. The EAC assesses this incident as follows:

-The May 20 bombing of the public transport mini van represents a disturbing trend when recalling the previous month's near simultaneous bombings of two commercial petrol stations in Addis Ababa, which also resulted in local civilian casualties. No group ever took credit for this incident.

-Both the public transport mini-van and petrol bombings appear to be targeting Ethiopians. Both of these venues are primarily patronized by poor to moderate income Ethiopians. The petrol station bombings

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targeted the kerosene pumps. Kerosene is primarily used by poor and moderate income Ethiopians for cooking and heating purposes.

- The EAC agreed a warden message was prudent. Post will work with CA to accomplish this.

-Although the EAC agreed these incidents represent a disturbing trend, they do not necessarily represent an increased risk to the U.S. diplomatic mission in Ethiopia. Mission personnel (with the exception of Peace Corps volunteers) are discouraged from using public transport. The EAC concurred with advising American citizens who do use public transportation to be aware of the risk posed by unattended items in public places.

-The EAC agreed it was prudent to fine tune posts' notification systems, to include revamping the telephone tree as well as encouraging wide spread and regular monitoring of the Embassy's radio network by all COM personnel. The RSO will take the lead on this and issue mission wide guidance within the next 24 hours.

-Post's physical and procedural security posture is already operating at an optimal level. The RSO will brief the LGF and RSO personnel and remind them to be proactive and vigilant.

¶18. (U) Post EAC will continue this situation as well as the security environment in Ethiopia in general, and report any developments to the department accordingly.

YAMAMOTO